
Workers are putting the final touches to the New Acropolis Museum in Athens in readiness for its opening later this week. The building has been specifically designed to house the Elgin Marbles which are in the British Museum in London. From Athens Malcolm Brabant reports:

This is going to be a very uncomfortable week for Britain. Greece's Culture Minister, Antonis Samaras, has **stoked up** the pressure by rejecting what he claimed was an offer by the British Museum **to loan** some of the sculptures that were hacked from the Parthenon **at the turn of** the 19th Century.

The British Museum said it would consider a three or four month long loan, but only if Greece acknowledged that London **was the rightful owner**. Mr Samaras said Greece could do no such thing as it would **legitimise** Lord Elgin's theft and vandalism.

For years, the unsuccessful efforts to secure the return of the long **sculpted frieze** have been conducted in polite terms by diplomats and academics. Many Greeks have become tired of what one new movement has described as the Athens government's **wishy-washy** tactics. Over the past four months 100,000 people have **signed up for** what promises to be a more dynamic campaign. Some of them will demonstrate outside the new museum the night before the **inauguration**.

The group's leader, Alexis Mantheakis, said that if London could **hand back** India it should be capable of emptying a room at the British Museum.

Malcolm Brabant, BBC News, Athens

Vocabulary and definitions

stoked up	literally, added fuel to a fire; here, encouraged and increased
to loan	to give for a certain period of time, not forever
at the turn of	at the beginning of (a set phrase used when talking about centuries)
was the rightful owner	had the legal right to keep
legitimise	confirm the lawfulness of
sculpted frieze	a horizontal band forming part of a classical building, often decorated with sculpted ornaments or figures
wishy-washy	lacking in firm ideas, principles or noticeable qualities
signed up for	decided to join/take part in
inauguration	here, official opening ceremony
hand back	here, to abolish colonial control over

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